1 Course Goals

We will study a variety of modern (but not necessarily recent!) programming languages to broaden our horizons beyond Java and friends. Our focus will be on concepts first, particular languages second: Instead of covering a language “in depth” we will cover “just enough of it” to develop reading comprehension in service of conceptual understanding. However, we will also write small programs in each language to round out our experience. We will pay particular attention to issues such as scoping and parameter passing, modularity and abstract data types, type systems and type checking, parametric and subtype polymorphism, as well as abstractions for concurrent programming.

Prerequisites: Intermediate programming skills, familiarity with an object-oriented programming language.

Requirements: A laptop running a recent Debian or Ubuntu install, possibly as a virtual machine.

2 Text Books

There are no required text books to purchase but of course you’re welcome to buy a text book anyway. Here are a few suggestions (any edition will do):


Instead of a printed text book we’re going to use freely available online resources. Links will be provided in class.

3 Tentative Outline

The plan (!) is to cover the following programming languages in the order given, focussing on the highlighted concepts in particular.

1. Lambda Calculus: Programming as Pure Mathematics.
2. Lisp and Scheme: Implementing the Lambda Calculus.
4. Io: Prototypical Objects, Actors and Futures, literally everything is an object.

For each language we’ll cover the most important features in lecture and then apply what we learned in lab, both by modifying example code and writing small programs independently. Lab exercises (which may have to be finished as homework after lab) will be graded as your Studienarbeit and determine 60% of your final grade.

4 More Languages

Here are a number of languages (and an interesting focus area for each) that can serve as the basis for your presentation on the last day of classes:

1. Clojure (software transactional memory)
2. Erlang (fault tolerance)
3. Forth (embedded systems, firmware)
4. Haskell (lazy evaluation)
5. JavaScript (everything web)
6. Julia (multiple dispatch)
7. Lua (embedded scripting)
8. Nim (hygenic macros)
9. Plankalkül (the first “real” programming language?)
10. Prolog (logic programming)
11. SQL (relational database queries)

Presentations are 15 minutes, 15 slides each and can be done in pairs (provided each student talks for about half the time). Please practice and time (!) your presentations in advance to ensure that things go smoothly. (This is especially important if you plan on live coding.) Presentations will be graded as your Referat and determine 40% of your final grade.

5 Other Notes

I live and teach in Baltimore, MD for most of the year, so I am not offering this course in English “as an option” or some such thing: I’ll actually speak English 99.5% of the time. Please try to do the same, not just as a courtesy to me but to actually practice your English. Hey, it’s like getting an English course for free with your Computer Science course.
More modern languages provide powerful ways to deal with data. Instructions in programming language will tend to fall into three very general categories. Assignments/expressions: Change the value of a variable, or other data via an expression, which could be as simple as a number, or as complex as something like slicing in Python. You need to start learning any programming language. Some of the concepts used in the language will apply in other languages of the same family. For example, loops, variables, OOP, etc. You’ll pick those concepts as you go. Concepts in Programming Languages. John C. Mitchell. Stanford University. This textbook for undergraduate and beginning graduate students explains and examines the central concepts used in modern programming languages, such as functions, types, memory management, and control. The book is unique in its comprehensive presentation and comparison of major object-oriented programming languages. Separate chapters examine the history of objects, Simula and Smalltalk, and the prominent languages C++ and Java. The author presents foundational topics, such as lambda calculi and denotational semantics, in an easy-to-read, informal style, focusing on the main insights provided. Concepts in object-oriented languages. History of objects: Simula and Smalltalk. 12. Objects and run-time efficiency: C++ 13. This contribution presents the concepts behind an elective course on Concepts of programming Languages in the master’s degree program of the computer science department of the Fachhochschule Rosenheim. The course has been taught over the years, using the programming language Ada as a central subject throughout the course. Automatically exported from code.google.com/p/concepts-of-modern-programming-languages. 66 commits. 2 branches. Want to be notified of new releases in mmalohlava/concepts-of-modern-programming-languages? Sign in Sign up. Launching GitHub Desktop